

# Wisconsin Sharptail Status 2003

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## **Abstract**

The total number of dancing males on the 9 managed tracts in Wisconsin increased from 179 in 2002 to 188 this year, indicating a small improvement in the sharptail population since last year. The overall population has been on a gradual decline that started in 1998. Survey efforts by the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society in unmanaged habitats resulted in locating more sharptails in 2003, with a total of 336 birds found this spring compared to 209 last year.

## **Methods**

Sharptail populations on managed properties were monitored by counting displaying males on dancing grounds. Male birds were identified by observations from blinds placed on dancing grounds or with the aid of field glasses after approaching the dancing ground afoot or by vehicle. Complete census of display grounds was attempted on those properties designated as sharptail management tracts (Figure 1).

Sharptail surveys on private lands generally involved selecting one or more blocks of the best available habitat and then conducting listening routes along roads transecting those blocks. Those dancing grounds found within wildland habitat blocks were approached and all birds flushed from each site were counted, no attempt being made to distinguish sexes. The survey is a cooperative effort between DNR, USFS, GLIFWC, members of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, and volunteers. Sharptail surveys on unmanaged lands were concentrated within a portion of northwestern Wisconsin, primarily in deer management units 2 and 9 (Figure 1).

## **Results**

The 2003 dancing ground survey indicated slight increases in sharptail numbers on most managed sites, contributing to an overall increase of 5% in comparison to 2002 counts (Table 1). Dancing male counts increased on three of the nine managed lands including Douglas County Wildlife Area, Namekagon Barrens W.A., and Riley Lake W.A. Three of the managed areas declined, and two areas remained the same. One survey, the Wood County W. A. was not completed this year.

Replicates of these traditionally surveyed areas are the most dependable index to changes in sharptail grouse populations.

Survey efforts by members of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society resulted in a count of 336 birds in deer management units 2 and 9. This count was 61% higher than that obtained during a similar survey operation conducted in 2002.

**Table 1. Sharptail Population Trends on Managed Lands.**

Number of Dancing Males													
Property	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Crex Meadows W.A.	126	47	53	59	83	110	117	132	111	110*	73*	61	61
Douglas County W.A.	5	4	2	8	12	9	9	18	20	16	11	12	20
Kimberly Clark W.A.	56	32	20	20	28	20	15	25	40	39	5	9	4
Moquah Barrens W.M.A.	6	9	6	7	21	14	17	34	40	36	19	35	29
Namekagon Barrens W.A.	37	25	16	25	44	48	55	74	54	44	15	27	52
Pershing W.A.	37	34	24	16	26	30	43	34	22	**	19	13	3
Riley Lake W.M.A.	25	8	5	7	18	17	19	19	27	27	17	12	17
Wood County W.A.	54	13	11	16	19	18	10	17	18	6	0	8	n/a
Dike Seventeen	16	10	9	9	8	7	3	18	3	6	0	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>188</b>

\*Not a complete count of dancing males.

\*\*A few dancing males were present.

